

also agree with what President Clinton said in the State of the Union Message that we want a balanced budget? The answer is right there in the Chamber where he spoke. We can vote for it, and he can sign it, and we can do that without amending the Constitution.

The Constitution has been amended only 17 times since the Bill of Rights. Is that correct?

Mr. DORGAN. That is correct. As I pointed out, if the Constitution is amended at 2:25 today, at 2:26 the deficit will not have decreased by one penny. Why? Because altering the Constitution will not decrease the deficit. Only individual choices by men and women of goodwill in this Chamber who are willing to take some risks and take a little heat for it will cut the deficit and finally balance the budget.

I am willing to do that. I demonstrated that in 1993, as did the Senator from Vermont. We had the fiscal discipline.

If we can get some others to join us, we can balance this Federal budget. I just do not want us to play games, saying we balanced the budget, only then trying to explain to our children why the Federal debt continues to increase at the same time. That is not balancing the budget.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator. I believe the other side wishes to have time, and I yield the floor.

Ms. SNOWE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SESSIONS). The Senator from Maine.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Ms. SNOWE. I ask unanimous consent that at the hour of 2:30 p.m. today, the Senate turn to executive session to consider the nomination of Rodney Slater under a previous consent agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. SNOWE. For the information of all Senators, a rollcall vote is now scheduled to occur at approximately 3 o'clock on the nomination of Rodney Slater.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, could I just ask the distinguished Senator from Maine, and obviously I have no objection to this request, is it my understanding that the Senate will then go into a short recess for a caucus, or what is the plan? I just want to be advised.

Ms. SNOWE. That is correct. We are going to recess from 3 to 4 for a Republican conference.

Mr. LEAHY. The reason I asked that, Mr. President, we have been trying, Senator HATCH and I and those who filled in for us, to go back and forth on this debate, so I just alert people. Obviously, it is the proponents' of the amendment turn to go, and I yield the floor.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Senate continued with the consideration of the joint resolution.

Mr. GRASSLEY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I rise in support of this constitutional amendment. I have had an opportunity each and every time—and I suppose this is the fifth or sixth time now—in the period of time I have been in the Senate to vote for a constitutional amendment because I believe that such a statement in the Constitution would be a legitimate part of the Constitution. I learned that from serving in a State legislative body where I worked with such a statement within our State constitution, and I saw it bring discipline to both Republicans and Democrats in State legislative bodies to balance the budget, to be fiscally responsible, and have each generation pay its own way.

I have also voted for it because there is not such a statement within the Federal Constitution, and I have seen the lack of discipline in the Congress of the United States to balance the budget. Since I have seen that discipline work at the State legislative level and since State governments tend to be laboratories for our political system, I think we can, with a great deal of certainty and ease of mind, feel confident that we are doing the right thing by placing that discipline on Members of Congress.

The rule of law is something that is traditional to our British-American legal system. Other societies as well might have a rule of law not exactly like ours but still have a respect for basic documents. The purpose of the rule of law is predictability and stability for the future.

Constitutions are part of the rule of law. Constitutions are adopted by societies because it brings discipline to policymakers in Government. It brings a certainty to the relationship of people who govern and the people who are governed. Part of that certainty is discipline on the part of policymakers like those of us in the Congress. So we have a Constitution, and it has worked well to bring stability, to bring discipline, and to bring predictability to the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed.

We see that discipline works in most of the policymaking between the Federal Government and our people, but we have not seen discipline work in the fiscal arena. Has it always been that way? No, it has not always been that way, because for the first 160 years of our country, except during times of war, we had more years where we had budgets balanced and surpluses than years we ran deficits. It was pretty well understood that fiscal discipline, even though it was not written in the Constitution, was an integral part of the tradition of America.

Since the year 1969, or for most of the time since World War II, that has not

been the case. We have shown anything but discipline when it comes to being a caretaker of the tax dollars we raise. The American public sees that. That is why, overwhelmingly, in mail and surveys and everything else, the people of the United States are telling the Congress we need discipline in fiscal matters and that they see a constitutional amendment as bringing that discipline.

It has been 28 years since the time we last ran a surplus. Congress in that period of time has made some feeble attempts to bring our national debt under control—but has failed. I have served with many fine Congressmen and Senators who have made valiant efforts to curb runaway spending. Regardless of their good faith, no balanced budget was produced. The goal has remained out of reach. In the end, then, we must conclude the will to balance the budget has been weak. That is why we desperately need the discipline of a constitutional amendment.

The scope of the national debt is immense. Every year this monster grows as it gobbles up the American dream for our young people. That American dream says that our children should have a better life than our generation as we had a better life than our mothers and fathers, as our mothers and fathers had a better life than our grandfathers and grandmothers. But the American dream is being snuffed out because of fiscal irresponsibility.

This situation has gotten so bad that we now spend nearly 40 cents of every dollar that we collect in income taxes just to pay interest costs on this national debt. The danger of this for the economy and the potentially disastrous effects for future generations have become impossible to ignore. You have to look long and hard these days to find public servants who do not say that they support balancing the budget. That is on both sides of the aisle. Rhetoric in support of budgetary control is at an unprecedented level. But it ends up that talk tends to be too cheap. I am sorry to say, and, as a result, the budget still remains unbalanced.

We must then have the structural discipline of a balanced budget amendment. Fortunately, there has been some progress made lately in bringing down the deficit. For the most part, this is the result of two actions—one by the Republican-controlled 104th Congress, and the other by President Clinton. In the case of the Republican-controlled 104th Congress, some spending restraint that we enacted; in the case of President Clinton, it was his suggestion for the largest ever tax increase that passed in 1993.

Now, of course, some of this reduction in the deficit can be explained by better than expected economic growth, which was mainly the result of the Federal Reserve's wise economic policies. And, despite initial budgets of President Clinton which projected deficits as far as the eye can see, the Congress has been able to submit a budget which balances by the year 2002. This is